



**ROAMING PONY FARM LLC**

## **Participant Handbook**

**Roaming Pony Farm  
474 Will Dean Road  
Springfield, VT 05156**

**Phone: 1-781-820-5648**

**Website: <https://www.roamingponyfarm.org>**

**Kelli Gerrior, Instructor**

# Roaming Pony Farm Participant Handbook

The following information, policies, and guidelines are designed to provide our participants and visitors with a safe, enjoyable, and beneficial experience at Roaming Pony Farm.

## Equine Assisted Services

Roaming Pony Farm offers afternoon lessons to children, adolescents, and adults with Cognitive, physical, and developmental disabilities. Benefits of Assisted Equine Services include:

- **Physical:** Participation in Equine Assisted Services offers a variety of opportunities to work on normalization of tone, motor planning, proprioceptive awareness, posture, balance, and strength.
- **Sensory:** A variety of sounds, smells, and textures are available at an equestrian facility.
- **Emotional:** The success of overcoming fear and anxiety can help a participant realize self-worth and increase self-esteem. The relationships that develop between participants, volunteers, and horses are all integral to a positive emotional experience.
- **Cognitive/Educational:** The horse provides our participants with the motivation to learn new things. Letter recognition, sequencing, problem solving, executive functions, and math can all be incorporated into Equine Assisted Services.
- **Social:** Equine Assisted Services enable individuals to interact with peers in a group activity and engage in appropriate social interactions. Participants learn how to identify and assert boundaries, how to read and react to social cues, and how to advocate effectively and assertively.

## Carriage Driving

Carriage driving is a recreational, social, and physical experience that offers mental challenges. Physical benefits from carriage driving include increased core strength, improvement in balance, and increased fine and gross motor coordination. Carriage driving encourages the development of self-confidence and empowers individuals to make choices and demonstrate a relationship with the horse as various maneuvers are learned. It can improve the cognitive skills of sequencing, following instructions, differentiating between left and right, etc. Driving is a meaningful venue for prosocial interaction with other participants, the volunteers, the instructor, and, of course, the horse.

## Therapeutic Riding

The horse provides a dynamic movement that has a positive effect on the rider's body. This movement stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that closely resembles the typical gait of a human. Participants use core strength to support themselves on top of the horse and strengthen muscles as they use aids to direct the horse where and how to move. Therapeutic riding lessons at Roaming Pony Farm are available as private lessons for individualized support.

## **Volunteers**

Roaming Pony Farm engages volunteers to support individuals in their horsemanship experience, to care for our facility, and to assist with events, fundraising, and development. Volunteers may use techniques prescribed by the instructor to ensure safety and promote skill development. They attend both a general orientation and specific training for their assigned roles.

Volunteers play an important role in the programs and development of Roaming Pony Farm. We encourage all family members to consider volunteering, though assisting in the same class as your participant may not be the best fit. We provide a positive and supportive environment for our volunteers to gain new skills and experience working with people and horses. Volunteering is also a great way to explore future career opportunities. If you can volunteer for an hour, or more, each week, you can be part of a fun and rewarding experience!

For more information on volunteering, see our website at: <https://www.roamingponyfarm.org>.

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Non-discrimination Policy**

Roaming Pony Farm is committed in policy, principle, and practice to maintaining an environment that prohibits discriminatory behavior and provides equal opportunities for all persons. Our goal is to provide a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming workplace and environment for staff, volunteers, students, participants and families, one that benefits and fosters understanding of others' experiences and views.

It is the policy of Roaming Pony Farm to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, age, marital status, national origin, mental or physical disability, political belief or affiliation, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, and any other class of individuals protected from discrimination under state or federal law. Furthermore, Roaming Pony Farm policy prohibits harassment of participants, volunteers, or students, including racial or sexual harassment, and retaliation for filing complaints of discrimination.

Roaming Pony Farm is committed to ensuring equitable access to our programs and facility. In so doing, we work to foster a community where horse and human interactions improve lives.

### **Attendance and Cancellation Policies**

Roaming Pony Farm expects consistent attendance by all participants. Make-up sessions are not available unless the instructor needs to cancel classes due to unforeseen circumstances, such as inclement weather.

Participants are responsible for payment of cancelled and missed lessons unless:

- the lessons are medically excused (with a physician's note and/or symptoms that prevent safe participation in Equine Assisted Services) as approved by the Program Director
- The lesson was cancelled by Roaming Pony Farm and a make-up session could not be offered

As soon as you are aware of a lesson you cannot attend - at least 48 hours in advance – please let us know. You may call the instructor directly at 781-820-5648.

In the event that you need to withdraw fully from participation mid-session, please inform us as soon as you are aware. Credit for services will be handled on an individual basis.

There are instances when we may offer an alternative activity to maintain safety, due to weather or other factors. This may include an unmounted activity with or without a horse. If Roaming Pony Farm cancels lessons, a modified make-up activity may be offered to affected participants. If participants cancel due to weather while Roaming Pony Farm remains open, no make-up session is offered.

Reasons class may be cancelled include:

- Weather safety concerns
- Road closures
- State closure mandates
- Power outages

If Roaming Pony Farm chooses to close due to the weather, we will notify the volunteers and participants at least 2 hours prior to the start of the lesson. Notification will be provided via personal phone call or text message.

## **Scheduling**

Participants will be notified of enrollment at least 3 weeks prior to the start of a session. Confirmation of intent to participate must be received by Roaming Pony Farm by the designated date each session. A calendar of class dates is provided prior to the start of each session. Please make note of any days when programs are not in session (holidays, spring break, etc.).

## **Helmets, Footwear, and Other Attire**

All participants must wear a current (manufactured within the last 5 years), ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet with the chin strap secured when working with or around horses.

Roaming Pony Farm saddles are equipped with safety stirrups. For additional safety, participants should wear sturdy-soled boots with a ¼ inch heel. Appropriate footwear includes paddock boots, cowboy boots, or athletic sneakers. These will be worn regardless of weather conditions. Inappropriate footwear includes Uggs, Converse, slip-on sneakers, Sperry's/boat shoes, and sandals, as these do not provide sufficient protection. All riders that ride off-lead at a trot will be required to wear proper riding boots (smooth-soled boots with a heel).

Participants should dress appropriately for the weather (e.g., gloves in the winter, breathable fabrics in summer). We will provide water breaks during the lesson on hot days. We encourage all participants who partake in therapeutic riding to wear long pants year-round, for comfort and safety. Appropriate pants include jeans, heavy cotton trousers, or riding breeches. Nylon, loose-fitting (such as snowpants) or stretchy materials are discouraged as they are slippery on a saddle. Shorts are not appropriate as wearing them while riding will cause chafing and discomfort for the rider. To ensure that nothing gets tangled or caught while working around the horses, coats should be zipped and scarf tails tucked into the coat. Hats cannot be worn under helmets as this would affect the fit of the helmet.

For questions regarding footwear or attire, please contact your instructor.

## **Participant Records**

Participants are required to update their registration information annually. Documents can be downloaded from the website, here: <https://www.roamingponyfarm.org>. We will send links for required paperwork with schedule confirmation. Participants are also required to update medical forms at a minimum of every 3 years. (Some diagnoses will require annual updates.) Participants with seizure, allergy, asthma, or other diagnoses that require immediate emergency response will need to provide an emergency plan that outlines preferred/required medical response. Roaming Pony Farm will communicate directly with the participant/guardian to ascertain any aspects of the emergency plan that may produce precautions or contraindications for participating. Current, accurate information is vital to our ability to provide effective services. Forms must be received two weeks prior to service delivery for each participant. Up-to-date registration is mandatory for entrance to the barn. Updated medical forms are mandatory for both riding and carriage driving activities.

## **Change of Health or Medication Status**

Participants must inform Roaming Pony Farm immediately and in writing of any changes in health status, conditions, and medications. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in weight, medication dosages, revised diagnoses, medical interventions, surgeries, seizure activity, etc. This information is integral to our ability to provide safe, effective services.

## **Confidentiality Policy**

At Roaming Pony Farm, we place great importance on protecting the confidential information of our participants, staff, and volunteers. "Confidential Information" includes, but is not limited to, personally identifiable information such as surnames, telephone numbers, addresses, emails, etc., as well as the non-public business records of Roaming Pony Farm. For this reason, we request that attendees use discretion and get prior permission before taking photos on the property.

## **Parking**

The speed limit on Roaming Pony Farm grounds is 5 mph. Please be respectful of the neighbors and abide by the posted speed limits on your way to the farm.

## **Telephone**

A cell phone will be available in the event of an emergency. Please see staff for assistance.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Problems should be handled immediately, confidentially, and directly between the parties involved and Roaming Pony Farm.

## **Safety and Conduct for Participants and Visitors**

Roaming Pony Farm supports all efforts to promote safe conditions at its facility. Working with horses is a high-risk activity. The following rules must be adhered to at all times:

- Use gentle hands and quiet bodies while on or near a horse.
- Running, yelling, abusive or aggressive actions are not allowed.
- Appropriate attire and footwear (no sandals or bare feet) are required in the barn and paddock areas.
- Hand-feeding of horses is not allowed under any circumstances. Participants may feed treats to their horses via the designated treat feeders.
- Photography or video are not allowed without permission.
- Children must be supervised by an adult at all times.
- Parents may view lessons from outside the arena.
- No pets are allowed on the grounds. This includes emotional support animals. Per ADA requirements, service animals are welcome in public areas.
- Smoking, alcohol, illegal substances, and weapons are not allowed on the premises.
- Visitors wishing to tour the facility must set up a pre-arranged appointment and visit only at that time.
- Please respect any posted off-limits areas.

Roaming Pony Farm has made careful assessment of its facility and grounds in the development of a comprehensive Risk Management Plan. Emergency procedures are posted in the barn.

## **Roaming Pony Farm LLC Statement of Participant Eligibility or Dismissal**

Roaming Pony Farm offers services to individuals with special needs. Eligibility for participation in Roaming Pony Farm programs is based solely upon an individual's ability to participate meaningfully and safely, provided the necessary resources are available, including: an instructor, horse, volunteers, and class availability that meets the individual's needs. Financial consideration is not taken into account in determining eligibility.

Roaming Pony Farm fully ascribes to the Precautions and Contraindications as recommended by the Medical Committee of PATH International, as well as Professional Standards. Therefore, we will provide initial and ongoing evaluations for all prospective and active participants.

Individuals accepted into Roaming Pony Farm programs are required to take part in periodic progress reviews and to follow Roaming Pony Farm rules and procedures. During these reviews, or as a result of unusual occurrences during a program session, we may find that continuance in the program for a given individual is inappropriate. For this reason, Roaming Pony Farm reserves the right to discontinue the participation of an individual in its programs when it is deemed that discontinuance is in the best interest of Roaming Pony Farm and/or the individual involved.

Roaming Pony Farm serves individuals across the lifespan with a variety of diagnoses and life circumstances. In order to serve a wide population, we maintain a diverse herd of equines of various sizes, shapes, types of movement, and personality.

Roaming Pony Farm implements weight limits for our programs (riding and carriage driving) that are based on the advice of our veterinarians, best practice for the Equine Assisted Services industry, and our professional judgement about what is safe for each horse/participant/volunteer combination. The maximum weight for riding is 180 pounds. The driving horses have individualized maximum pulling capacities that consider the total weight of the able-bodied whip, volunteer, and participant in the carriage. All riding horses have an assigned maximum weight limit (some horses have a limit under 180 pounds). In addition, rider characteristics such as skill level, muscle tone, balance, behavior, and equipment requirements are taken into account when making horse-participant matches. Weight limits ensure that our participants, volunteers, and instructors are safe when assisting with mounts, dismounts, and emergency procedures, and that our horses are comfortable and healthy so they can continue this important work for as long as they are able.

Participant weights are reported on initial and annual registration forms, and participants are weighed on site at the time of assessment and at the start of each session. On-site weigh-ins occur in a private location, with the participant in their riding gear, in an effort to be sensitive to participant needs. Should a participant be over the weight limit for their assigned horse, it may or may not be possible to provide an unmounted opportunity as a day-of alternative.

**Roaming Pony Farm LLC reserves the right to decide when we are unable to serve an applicant due to lack of resources and/or safety concerns, including PATH International guidelines relating to contraindications for participation.**

## **Riding Participation Criteria**

- Physically able to sit symmetrically with torso upright and legs astride the horse during dynamic movement
- Physically able to maintain head and neck position independently in proper alignment with dynamic movement
- Weigh less than 180 pounds with riding equipment on
- Able to sit independently without sidewalker support
- Does not exhibit physical or behavioral conditions that are contraindicated by PATH Intl. (see Medical History Form)
- Have current signed and dated paperwork – including Participant Registration form, Physician's Statement for Participation form, and Annual Update form
- Benefit physically, emotionally, socially and/or cognitively from services provided at Roaming Pony Farm
- Complete an intake assessment where trained staff evaluate eligibility
- Able to accommodate the movement of the horse without pain
- Able to tolerate a riding safety helmet
- Adequate range of motion in hip(s) to sit astride
- Safety awareness around animals
- Ability to express pain or discomfort
- Behave in a manner that is safe for self, horses, and others

## **Vermont Equine Liability Statute**

Under Vermont Law, an equine activity sponsor is not liable for an injury to, or the death of, a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities that are obvious and necessary, pursuant to 12 V.S.A. § 1039. Full statute follows.

§ 1039. Equine activities; acceptance of inherent risks

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Equine” means a horse, pony, mule, or donkey.

(2) “Equine activity” includes:

(A) Equine shows, fairs, competitions, performances, or parades that involve any or all breeds of equines and any of the equine disciplines, including dressage, hunter and jumper horse shows, Grand Prix jumping, three-day events, combined training, rodeos, riding, driving, pulling, cutting, polo, steeplechasing, English and western performance riding, endurance trail riding, gymkhana games, and hunting;

(B) Equine training or teaching activities, or both;

(C) Rides, trips, or hunts.

(3) “Equine activity sponsor” means an individual, group, club, organized camp, club, partnership, or corporation, whether or not the sponsor is operating for profit or nonprofit, which sponsors, organizes, or provides the facilities for an equine activity, including pony clubs; 4-H clubs; hunt clubs; riding clubs; school and college-sponsored classes, programs, and activities; therapeutic riding programs; stable and farm owners and operators, instructors, and promoters; or equine facilities, including farms, stables, clubhouses, pony ride strings, fairs, and arenas at which the activity is held.

(4) “Participant” means any person, whether amateur or professional, who engages in an equine activity, whether or not a fee or other consideration is paid to participate in the equine activity.

(b) No person shall be liable for an injury to, or the death of, a participant resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities, insofar as those risks are necessary to the equine activity and obvious to the person injured.

(c)(1) An equine activity sponsor may post and maintain signs which contain the warning notice specified in this subsection. Such signs shall be placed in a clearly visible location in the proximity of the equine activity. The warning notice shall appear on the sign in black letters, with each letter to be a minimum of one inch in height.

(2) Every written contract entered into by an equine activity sponsor for the providing of professional services, instruction, or the rental of equipment or tack or an equine to a participant, whether or not the contract involves equine activities on or off the location or site of the equine professional’s business, may contain in clearly readable print the warning notice.

(3) The signs and contracts described in this subsection shall contain the following warning notice:

**WARNING**

Under Vermont Law, an equine activity sponsor is not liable for an injury to, or the death of, a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities that are obvious and necessary, pursuant to 12 V.S.A. § 1039. (Added 1995, No. 136 (Adj. Sess.), § 2.)



## **Equine Code of Ethics**

Roaming Pony Farm will support Equine Assisted Services while providing the horses in its care with the highest ethical consideration. Horses working in programs are selected by the professional staff. Once a horse is in residence at Roaming Pony Farm, it becomes a reflection of the program in its entirety. Each horse is cared for with professional expertise and management. The staff consider the comfort and well-being of each participant, volunteer, and horse to be their highest priority.

Horses are scheduled to work in a manner consistent with their physical ability. The needs of the herd are met with regard to workload, feeding, and general care. Prior to work in program, each horse is inspected for injury, illness, or discomfort. Horses are not asked to work when they are uncomfortable or unfit. Horses no longer able to serve in the Roaming Pony Farm programs are given every consideration when placed elsewhere for retirement.

## **Equine Limitations**

It takes a special horse to become a part of the Roaming Pony Farm herd. Only a small percentage of prospects actually end up in program, after demonstrating that they have the high level of patience, tolerance and the steady rhythmic gait required to be a good therapy horse. Like people, no two horses are alike – each offers specific benefits to our participants, each has their own needs and limitations. Therefore it is critical that we do not exceed each horse's weight limit and work schedule as established by equine professionals. We ask for your understanding as we try our best to serve our participants within the limits of our herd. Horse changes may be made mid-session to ensure the most appropriate fit. Roaming Pony Farm strives to provide alternative activities such as carriage driving and unmounted activities to those for whom we may not have a suitable riding horse.